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ALCOHOL IN POLITICS.

ALCOHOL is already in politics: I refer not to the sporadic efforts of detached sections of the country, such as have been familiar to the public for the last fifty years, but to a broad and general movement among the masses of the American people, which, in my belief, will not cease until the traffic in intoxicating liquors is prohibited by both State and National law. Whatever the final issue of the struggle, the immediate future will surely witness the hottest political battle that has ever been fought. When we consider that the continued existence of a vast industry involving at least one billion dollars, or one-fiftieth part of the capital of the country, depends upon the result, it is at once manifest that nothing in our peaceable history has paralleled the conflict which is now upon us.

There have been those who have proclaimed for years the approach of this conflict between alcohol and modern civilization, but the masses of the people, absorbed in the exacting duties and labors of the present, have disbelieved in the possibility of any serious political contest growing out of the effort of society to save its own life. There is sound philosophy as well as solid comfort in the reflection that "sufficient to the day is the evil thereof," and the generations which founded, developed, reconstructed, and preserved our institutions have been sufficiently employed in the great work which in the order of Providence was given to them to do. The progress of humanity is through and over difficulties and obstacles apparently insuperable; and now that we have, as we trust, made the union perpetual, we find the exertion of our utmost powers indispensable if we would save that union from an evil which, if not arrested, will destroy all the flower and fruitage of our national life. Although the masses of the people may not long anticipate the coming event,—and it is well that the performance of present

duty should not be embarrassed with the apprehension of that which does not press for immediate decision,—yet they comprehend the crisis at once when it comes. The people knew better than the Congress the full significance of the guns of Bunker Hill and of the hoarse cannonade of Sumter in later times. So now, what politicians and the so-called “higher classes” deride, or at least but half comprehend, is already coming to be recognized by the common people—who, after all, are *the* people—as the next great work of regeneration and development which they are called upon to perform in their sovereign capacity as arbiters of the destiny of themselves, of their children, and of the human race. There is not a single State of the American Union to-day in which the people do not as a whole believe the liquor question to be the most important one which politically concerns the public weal. True, existing parties are not willing that this question should come to the front. Existing forms are always conservative. They fear and oppose the coming giant, for they know that he will fashion all things anew. But ideas are almighty and issues force themselves. They will be decided. Progress is but the successive decision of issues as they present themselves to the minds of men; and this temperance issue which has stalked unbidden to the front will not be stayed or turned back. The state of mind which gives three hundred and twenty thousand votes to prohibition in Ohio is ripening in Alabama, Massachusetts, Arkansas, Oregon, and Illinois—everywhere in the national domain. There are but few honest men and no women who really dispute the terrible charges which are made against the use of alcohol as a beverage. If alcohol is in politics and the issue is to be met, the question of method must be first decided. There are but three courses open: Freedom, License, Prohibition.

Society nowhere attempts to exist with the traffic in alcoholic liquors unrestricted. Experience has compelled the attempt at restriction, so that the question of the right of society in the premises is settled, just as is the right of self-defense. There remain then only the remedies of License and Prohibition, and the question as to which shall be employed must be decided wholly by the effect which either remedy produces when practically applied. Between these methods of action the choice of the people is constantly being made, and it is this process which, in a great measure, constitutes the reform itself. That which

believes itself to be the true temperance sentiment in this country considers the alleged remedy of license, whether high or low, as no remedy at all, and as a flagitious partnership of society with alcohol. It may be granted that license is a source of revenue to the State. So were indulgences for other crimes in former ages; and the license of any single crime whatever is as justifiable as that of the common cause of every crime. The masses of the people are comprehending this and see clearly that prohibition is the only remedy,—all else is a cheat and a snare. This much has been demonstrated a thousand times during the last half century, and the verdict is made up. If any one disputes this proposition now, do not hope to convince him by an array of facts, but search for some ulterior cause of self or party interest, or tendency in personal habit or of social life, or in a belief that the use should not be restrained at all save by personal choice.

No great evil was ever yet subdued by license. Prohibition absolute by law is the only remedy sanctioned by experience and common sense. Even prohibition partly fails. My chief object in this article, however, is not to argue or even to assert the validity of the leading propositions of the Prohibitionists. But recognizing the fact that alcohol is already in politics, and that it will stay there until the battle is fought out to the bitter end, I wish to advance a few suggestions as to the future plan of action. The peculiar nature of American government complicates the situation. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as the State government or as the National government. Neither alone is government,—each is a part of a great whole,—each is supreme in its sphere, and each is as essential to the formation of government in its complete and proper sense as are the people who individually possess the citizenship of both.

The evils of alcohol are national in extent. No one disputes the power of the General Government to regulate or destroy the liquor traffic in the Territories except those who hold to the full-grown doctrines of squatter sovereignty, and who would remit intemperance and all other evils, and, in fact, the whole social status, to the people of the Territories themselves. As regards the States, if the power of each of them over the alcohol traffic were absolute, there would be no occasion for this article. But such is not the fact, neither is it the theory of the law as to the relation of the governments of the States and of the nation to

each other. In all questions touching foreign commerce, and commerce between the States and with the Indian tribes, the General Government is supreme. Whatever is property and an article of commerce in any State or Territory, or in any foreign country, which seeks transmission anywhere in the entire domain of the whole country, is under the protection of the law and of the army and navy of the United States. The lines which separate the States are at best geographical—that is to say practically imaginary. The United States ship alcohol in the original packages from every point in and out of the country to every point in the country, and no earthly power, save rebellion, or an amendment of the national Constitution can prevent.

The appetite for alcohol is everywhere. It is almost as strong as the love of life, and constitutes an imperative demand. If the supply exists the demand will make short work with the exterior of original packages. In other words, the National Government is the great ally and protector of alcohol; and so long as the national Constitution is its real stronghold, the battle for prohibition in the States, while it may succeed in the official bulletins and while it will rescue a great multitude of bodies and souls from death, must still falter and in the end substantially fail or at best be renewed forever. Even if prohibition reigned in every State and in the Territories, yet so long as importation and transportation should continue, as they must until the national Constitution is changed, the result of legal reforms within would very largely be to transfer the capital now invested and paying taxes in our own country to foreign lands, to be there used to the still larger profit of the owners, and the support of other governments, or to give the entire capital and profit to foreigners, who would then manufacture and sell full supply of the American demand.

I would by no means be understood to assert that the heroic struggles in the States hitherto have been useless, or that the glorious conflicts of the present can be suspended. On the contrary, they are the very life and hope of the cause. They very largely restrict and do greatly reform. They create the public opinion which will crystallize in both State and national law. The struggle in any State is part of a greater one in the nation at large. It is all one fight; but it is high time that the effort which is one in its nature and object should concentrate for its natural and necessary end. The effort which

this generation is making should not, because of misdirection, fail of that complete success which is so indispensable to the future of our land and of the world. There is force enough to win everything, and it is easier far to accomplish both—to carry the States and the nation at large—than either alone.

State elections, and Congressional elections, and Presidential elections, are all taking place together. Alcohol is a political issue that more truly concerns national politics than it does the politics of the several States. Why, then, is it that year after year the dreary work of Sisyphus goes on in every State; that the stone is rolled up the hill with infinite labor in the State only to be rolled down again by the force of national law at the top? Why is it that in Maine, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts for years, and now in Kansas, Iowa, and wherever prohibition shall hereafter succeed, national law is permitted to save the accursed traffic, and nullify laws enacted by the States for the preservation of their people?

Nor is prohibition of the sale of alcohol the only end to be attained by national action. The suppression of the manufacture of alcohol for hurtful purposes is logically the first step, and practically an indispensable one to the reform. This truth is coming to be understood, and everywhere the prohibition of the manufacture as well as sale for use as a beverage is demanded. The objection that the manufacture cannot be stopped is seen to be absurd when the attempt is actually made. It is much easier to control manufacture and distribution in the distilleries and breweries of the country than to control the sale in the hundreds of thousands of saloons and dram-shops, as well as authorized agencies to which the "original package" is now transported by national law. Every place of manufacture is now under the strictest supervision of national law in order to collect the nation's share of blood-money. Surely it would be comparatively easy to authorize only the manufacture, transportation, and sale for beneficial use, and by a proper system to trace the product of the manufacturer to the duly authorized agencies of States, cities, and towns, for retail consumption, as now provided in all State prohibitory laws.

Prohibitory laws have already attempted with considerable success the most difficult work, which is that of controlling the sale. What might not be done if the manufacture also were within reach of the law throughout the whole country? But the

entire power of the traffic can easily be concentrated in a few States or in a single State, and hence in the absence of national prohibition it is only necessary for it to retain possession of a single locality in order to preserve the market of the whole. Although an alert public opinion might partially enforce State laws for a season, it is quite evident from past experience that in time the enemy would again come in like a flood. The drinkward tendencies of the Caucasian race, notably of our own branch of it, will conquer any but the most wise, comprehensive, and far-reaching legislation, which shall by its good results forever create and reinforce that overwhelming public opinion which wages perpetual war through the judicial power against all forms of crime. Although great good might be accomplished by prohibitory Congressional legislation in the Territories and the District of Columbia, still, the only national law which can radically remedy the evils of alcoholism must be enacted by an amendment of the Constitution of the United States, to be supplemented by appropriate statutes for its enforcement. The submission of such an amendment, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, importation, exportation, and transportation of intoxicating liquors for use as beverages, to the people of the States for their ratification or rejection ought not to be opposed by any party organization. If the Republican and Democratic parties were so far to respect the temperance sentiment of the country as to perform this act of deference to the theory of our institutions, they would be consulting their own peace and the integrity of their respective organizations. It is very evident that a vast mass of the voters of the country are prepared to break from old party affiliations unless they find within the organizations to which they now belong an honest purpose to prohibit the traffic in alcohol by both State and national law, or at least to take the sense of the people on that subject. The nominees of no party will receive their support in the next Presidential campaign which does not explicitly pledge itself to submit by Congressional action such a prohibitory amendment to the people in the ordinary method of amending the Constitution.

This condition of things may not seriously embarrass the Democratic party, but even that party will find, in the Southern States especially, a spirit abroad among the people of which its leaders may little dream. Unless the Republican party leaders are blind and given over "to believe a lie to the end," they will

take up the standard and move forward. The Republican party will not sit on the fence much longer. The masses of the people in it, and a very large majority of the virtue, intelligence, and wisdom of that party believe in the prohibition of the liquor traffic, and these elements will get down on the right side of the fence very soon. The fence is not an easy seat, and those who desire effective action cannot, or at least will not, wait much longer for their former associates in contentions which are passing away to make up their minds upon the liquor question. It ought not to require much thought or time for a Republican to decide that the people should have an opportunity to amend the national Constitution if they please.

If the leaders of the Republican party fail seasonably to comprehend this, I fear that they will find themselves retired or their party defeated—one or the other, and perhaps both—when the votes are counted in national elections not far remote. What the Republican party most lacks now is the courage of its own convictions. Its convictions are strong enough, and the path of duty is clear enough. We cannot dally and delay forever. Courage and resolution alone are necessary in the future as in the past. Losses in one direction will be made up by enthusiastic and permanent gains, and still greater losses from the very heart of the party will be prevented.

It is better for the country that the votes of foreign nationalities at the American polls should meet an issue upon which they can themselves divide. Upon discussion of this issue the Irishman and the German will in due time demonstrate that they are Americans. When the temperance element of the Republican party goes out of it, the party will be dead. Its soul will be gone and its body offensive. I believe that the following form of a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States will commend itself to the common sense of the American people. It is taken from a speech delivered in the House of Representatives December 27, 1876 :

“Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled (two-thirds of each House concurring therein), That the following amendment to the Constitution be, and hereby is, proposed to the States, to become valid when ratified by the Legislatures of three-fourths of the several States, as provided in the Constitution :

“ARTICLE —.

“SECTION 1. From and after the year of our Lord 1900 the manufacture and sale of distilled alcoholic intoxicating liquors, or alcoholic liquors any

part of which is obtained by distillation or process equivalent thereto, or any intoxicating liquors mixed or adulterated with ardent spirits or with any poison whatever, except for medicinal, mechanical, chemical, and scientific purposes, and for use in the arts, anywhere within the United States and the Territories thereof, shall cease; and the importation of such liquors from foreign states and countries to the United States and Territories, and the exportation of such liquors from, and the transportation thereof within and through any part of this country, except for the use and purposes aforesaid, shall be, and hereby is, forever thereafter prohibited.

"SEC. 2. Nothing in this article shall be construed to waive or abridge any existing power of Congress, nor the right, which is hereby recognized, of the people of any State or Territory to enact laws to prevent the increase and for the suppression or regulation of the manufacture, sale, and use of liquors, and the ingredients thereof, any part of which is alcoholic, intoxicating, or poisonous, within its own limits, and for the exclusion of such liquors and ingredients therefrom at any time, as well before as after the close of the year of our Lord 1900; but until then, and until ten years after the ratification hereof, as provided in the next section, no State or Territory shall interfere with the transportation of said liquors or ingredients, in packages safely secured, over the usual lines of traffic to other States and Territories wherein the manufacture, sale, and use thereof for other purposes and use than those excepted in the first section, shall be lawful: *Provided*, That the true destination of such packages be plainly marked thereon.

"SEC. 3. Should this article not be ratified by three-fourths of the States on or before the last day of December, 1890, then the first section hereof shall take effect and be in force at the expiration of ten years from such ratification; and the assent of any State to this article shall not be rescinded nor reversed.

"SEC. 4. Congress shall enforce this article by all needful legislation."

The following general propositions were laid down as the basis of the argument on that occasion:

"In order to justify legislation of any kind restricting the manufacture and use of alcoholic liquors, I believe it to be necessary to maintain these propositions:

"*First*. That it is the duty of society, through the agency of government, which is the creature of society, to enact and enforce all laws which, while protecting the individual in the full possession and enjoyment of his inalienable rights, tend to promote the general welfare, and especially whenever that welfare is impaired or threatened by any existing or impending evil, it is the duty of society to enact and enforce laws to restrict or destroy that evil. It may be proper to observe that no law can promote the general welfare which deprives an individual of an inalienable right, when that right is properly defined, or which impairs the enjoyment thereof, whether of life, liberty, property, or the pursuit of happiness. But society has inalienable rights as well as individuals, and the right to such legislation as will promote the general welfare, in its true sense, is one of them; and the inalienable rights of individuals and the inalienable rights of society at large are limited by, and must be construed and enjoyed with reference to each other.

"Second. While society has no right to prevent or restrict the use of an article by individuals for purposes which are beneficial only, yet if that use, beneficial to some, is found by experience to be naturally and inevitably greatly injurious in its effects upon others and upon society in general, then it becomes the duty of society, in the exercise of its inalienable right, to promote the general welfare and in self-defense to social life, just as the individual may defend his natural life, to prohibit, regulate, or restrict the use of that article, as the case may require. This principle is daily applied in laws which control the manufacture and use of gunpowder, nitro-glycerine, dynamite, and other things of great and dangerous potency, the unrestrained use of which, even for useful purposes, has been shown by experience to be destructive to the inalienable rights of others. This results from the common principle of law that every man must so enjoy his own rights as neither to destroy nor impair those of another, and it is the great end for which government is instituted among men to compel him so to do.

"Third. No person has a right to do that to himself which impairs or perverts his own powers; and when he does so by means of that which society can reach and remove by law, to such extent as to become a burden or a source of danger to others, either by his example or by his liability to commit acts of crime, or to be essentially incapacitated to discharge his duties to himself, his family, and society, the law — that is, society — should protect both him and itself. A man has no more right to destroy *his* inalienable rights than those of another, or than another has to deprive him of his own. The laws restraining the spendthrift in the destruction of his inalienable right in property and punishing suicide (as the common law did, by forfeiture of estate, etc.), or attempted self-murder (as the law does now), are familiar examples of the application of this principle.

"These are elementary principles of law and of common sense. They are corner-stones of all just government. To these principles every member of society is held to have given his assent. They are unquestioned, so far as I know, by any one who believes in any law. They are axiomatic and indestructible as the social organization itself.

"Fourth. The use (unless medicinally) of alcoholic liquors to the extent of intoxication or poisoning — which, as will hereafter be seen, is the same thing as intoxication — is an injury to the individual; it inflicts great evils upon society at large; it is destructive to the general welfare; it is of a nature which may be greatly restricted if not destroyed by the enforcement of appropriate laws; consequently such laws should be enacted and enforced; and this should be done in our country, either by the States or by the General Government, or by both, if such laws can be made more efficient thereby."

The above form of amendment to the Constitution may lack somewhat in radical scope; and the briefer forms, taking effect at once and including distilled and fermented drinks in the same provisions, which have been adopted in Kansas and Iowa and proposed to be added to the constitutions of other States, may be preferred.

This, however, has commended itself to my own judgment as one which could be enacted by this generation and as likely to work out in its practical administration the full measure of reform which national action can accomplish. The slave trade was abolished by a constitutional provision which took effect twenty years after its adoption. Had its provisions been made operative at once, the whole Constitution would have been defeated. There are reasons why an amendment will be found difficult of ratification in three-fourths of the States, which denies local option to the States in regard to light wines, cider, and fermented drinks; even in Maine the pronounced friends of prohibition fear to ask an amendment of the constitution of their own State which shall forbid the manufacture and sale of domestic cider. The form above submitted frees the State from the shackles of Federal power so far as non-distilled liquors are concerned. The power of the State to prohibit is in every respect enlarged and reënforced, and in none curtailed.

There may yet be developed a public sentiment which will apply the same rule of absolute and immediate national prohibition to all forms of intoxicating poison. The continual public discussion of a national measure is a national notice to the maker and dealer to quit. Any amendment of the national Constitution, which sets the State free to control the traffic within her own borders, would be a great advance. Until at least this is done, the war must go on, and public sentiment is likely to become more rather than less determined in dealing with the curse of alcohol.

HENRY W. BLAIR.